

THE GUILD Reporter

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Courts, Congress focus on FCC rules

Partisan majority ignores hundreds of thousands of protest cards, e-mails

With an increasingly acrimonious Federal Communications Commission deciding by a partisan 3-2 vote to loosen or eliminate media ownership restrictions, the campaign to block further media consolidation has shifted to Congress—and, with several lawsuits threatened, promises to spill into the courts as well.

The June 2 vote, taken despite a request by the minority Democrats for a 30-day postponement, came amid a flood of approximately 750,000 letters, postcards and e-mails that all but unanimously opposed the FCC's decision. Critics charged that the changes will increase corporate consolidation of the media.

The industry-lobbied vote came just a week after the Center for Public Integrity

released a study disclosing that FCC commissioners and staff took more than 2,500 trips over the previous eight years—at a cost of \$2.8 million “primarily” underwritten by the telecommunications and television industries. Among the destinations were London, Buenos Aires and Beijing.

Among the FCC's actions was the near elimination of the cross-ownership rule, which barred a single company from owning both a newspaper and radio and television stations in the same market. Still off-limits are 31 markets with three or fewer TV stations, but newspaper executives promptly announced that it is these markets that are precisely the ones most in need of greater consolidation. “We just couldn't get them to see that,” a disbelieving Dean Singleton,

chief executive of Media News Group, told trade journal Editor & Publisher.

The public outcry, however, has prompted the Senate Commerce Committee to consider a proposal that would restore at least some of the old rules. “I have a long voting record in support of deregulation,” said committee chairman John McCain, an occasionally maverick Republican from Arizona. “But the business of media ownership, which can have such an immense effect on the nature and quality of our democracy, is too important to be dealt with so categorically.”

Indeed, the issue of democratic vitality transformed an arcane bureaucratic rules procedure into a hot-button cause that united such disparate groups as the National Rifle Association and the National Organization

for Women. “The obscurity of this issue is gone forever,” observed FCC Commissioner Michael Copps, who led the charge against relaxing the rules.

Court suits also are being threatened from both sides, with consumer advocates claiming the FCC has gone too far and media companies insisting it didn't go far enough. Consumers Union, among others, told The Washington Post it would fight the changes in court as “riddled with inconsistencies.”

Ironically, however, more definitive criticisms had to wait more than a week—until the FCC could produce a text of the changes it had approved, further fueling its critics' charges of high-handedness and secrecy. Intervenor had 30 days in which to ask for reconsideration, 60 days to file suit.

Hearse to you, J'nal-Register!

Band-Aids don't normally lead to a hearse—unless you're mobilizing for a fair contract in suburban Philadelphia, where both have been pulled out of an eclectic bag of tactics in a lengthy struggle for new contracts at three Journal Register Company newspapers.

Earlier this year, Guild members at the Delaware County Times, the Norristown Times Herald and the Pottstown Mercury slapped Band-Aids on their faces, heads and arms and then limped into three separate bargaining sessions. Their message: JRC's health insurance proposals hurt.

Just in case the bandages were too subtle for the Trenton, NJ-based corporation, the Pottstown mobilizers also arranged for a hearse to be parked in front

of the newspaper for one full day. A sign on the back of the vehicle captured the theme of all three negotiations: “We Are Dead Serious About Getting a Contract!”

So serious, in fact, that the leaders of the three units, all part of the Greater Philadelphia Newspaper Guild, started actively planning for this campaign more than a year before their contracts expired. They got together one Saturday every month to map strategies for a coordinated battle against a company that has been only too eager to chip away at their contracts, section by section.

The story was entirely different four years ago, when the three contracts were negotiated separately. The process ended with substantial concessions,



creating a determination among unit leaders never to let that happen again. One sign of the change: later this month, a bus will wend the vast suburbs of Philadelphia to pick up Guild members from all three units—folks who barely knew each other the last time around—then take them to JRC headquarters for a night of picketing and leafleting.

Although the company rejected a Guild proposal to engage in joint bargaining on all three contracts, representatives from each

of the units sit on each negotiating committee and many members have traveled from unit to unit to attend the bargaining sessions.

The result of all this unity, in more than a year of negotiations, is reflected in a slate of tentative agreements on non-economic issues that have blocked management's push for major concessions and scored some very real Guild gains. Still ahead, however, are the hard-core economic issues of wages and health insurance, with JRC refusing to pay retroac-

tivity and trying to give raises only on the top step of the pay scale. It also wants employees to pay more for health insurance.

Guild members, meanwhile, are sticking to the game plan. They regularly do informational picketing at all three locations. They have sent letters to advertisers. They have leafleted community events. And Delaware County Guild members have taken a strike authorization vote, while the other two units are seriously weighing that option.



In midst of talks, Sun recruits scabs

Three years after buying the Baltimore Sun as part of its \$8.3 billion acquisition of Times Mirror, the Tribune Co. is openly displaying its anti-union colors. With its current Guild contract set to expire June 24, and despite being in negotiations since April 29, the company has brought potential strike breakers from its other properties for training at Sun facilities.

The Sun is the Tribune's largest newspaper at which employees are represented by TNG-CWA, and the company overall has union representation

for less than a fifth of its 20,000 employees. But it inherited six unions at the Sun, including the Guild, which represents more than 600 editorial, advertising and technical workers.

Despite weeks of negotiations the two sides are significantly apart, with the company insisting on a 12-month wage freeze followed by “pay for performance,” higher health care premiums, a drastic reduction in sick leave and a demand for the “flexibility” to transfer employees to lower-paying positions—accompanied by cuts in

pay. Its only monetary proposal has been a \$1,000 signing bonus for each Guild-covered employee if a new contract is ratified by June 24.

But Tribune's most provocative move has been its importation of “replacement workers” from its newspapers in Los Angeles, Chicago, Hartford, Fort Lauderdale and Orlando. In response, the local has enlisted the help of Guild and CWA members in those cities to leaflet potential recruits with information about the situation.

The cynicism of Tribune's tactic was attacked in an Orlando

alternative weekly, in which columnist Jeffrey Billman referred to the “cutthroat Tribune” and its plans “to cram a bad deal down Sun workers' throats” by using scabs. But Billman had a response: “I will find and publish the

names of every reporter or editor who heads north,” he promised. “Why? Because you have no integrity. You are soulless, corporate slaves with no sense of social justice and no moral obligation to

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Tired of unending abuse, CMG files omnibus action

Fed up with a persistent pattern of violations of its collective bargaining agreement with the Canadian Broadcasting Corp., the Canadian Media Guild has filed a 21-page "omnibus" complaint covering a wide variety of issues. The formal complaint of unfair labor practices charges that the CBC routinely violates the contract, that it refuses to participate in resolving grievances and that it consistently creates new contract interpretations so as to deny Guild members their rights.

"We work hard to solve the problems our members face at the CBC," a union statement explained. "Many times, though, our efforts are hampered by the actions—and often, the inaction—of the Corporation. We've had enough." Once the Canada Industrial Relations Board has reviewed the charges, the statement added, "we have every confidence that the Board will agree that the CBC is trying to 'get around' the collective agreements, and that the Corporation will be ordered to change its ways."

Among the many areas covered by the complaint, the issue "of greatest concern" is the CBC's "ongoing and deliberate contracting out of employees," as well

as its inaccurate tracking of employee seniority rights. Subject to several grievances in the first half of 2002, such disputes were supposed to be resolved by a Memorandum of Agreement signed by the two parties last April. Instead, the Guild notes, the CBC has continued to discharge employees whose employment status is in dispute and has ignored its memorandum obligations, which "can only be seen as an act of bad faith."

Other alleged violations include:

- The CBC has ignored its commitment to negotiate work space issues with the union;
- The CBC's "systematic breaches" of the contract have forced the union to "routinely resort to the grievance procedure" to enforce the most basic provisions;
- The CBC withholds or provides inaccurate information, leaving the Guild unable to assess whether the company is violating its rights.

"In effect," the complaint summarizes, "the Corporation's attitude towards its collective agreement with the Guild is: catch us if you can."

The union has requested a hearing in Toronto to present further evidence.

Bob Jagolinzer dead at 60

Robert P. Jagolinzer, a veteran reporter for The Providence Journal and president of the Providence Newspaper Guild, died in a freak accident May 15.

Jagolinzer's body was found by police in the Warren River, near a dock where he had berthed his boat, after he apparently suffered a brain aneurism, fell into the water and drowned after passing out.

As president of the local for the past five years, Jagolinzer held office during an exceptionally difficult period, in which management at the Belo-owned Providence Journal has seemed intent on breaking the union. But his low-key style earned the respect of her adversaries, with Carol Young, the newspaper's deputy executive editor, hailing him as "a very earnest, dedicated" Guild president.

The local's executive committee, in establishing a memorial fund on behalf of Jagolinzer's widow, issued a statement of loss. "Every step of the way, we're missing Jag—his get-to-the point, plain-spoken style, his unruly shock of hair, his tough but jocular persona, and especially his leadership through the Guild's most difficult years," the committee said.

The memorial fund, known as the PNG/Helen's Fund, has been created to raise at least \$12,000, the amount Helen Jagolinzer will



USED WITH PERMISSION OF PROVIDENCE JOURNAL/STEVE SZYDLOWSKI

need to pay for her health insurance over the next three years, until she becomes eligible for Medicare. Mrs. Jagolinzer had a heart transplant several years ago and relies on expensive medication to prevent organ rejection. Although eligible to stay on her late husband's group health plan under COBRA, she must pay the

full cost of premiums.

The local has started the fund with a contribution of \$100. Donations may be made by sending checks, payable to PNG/Helen's Fund, to the Providence Newspaper Guild, 270 Westminster St., Providence, R.I. 02903; or call the Guild office at (401) 421-9466.

Sector conference set for late August

The Newspaper Guild's sector conference—its 68th annual gathering—has been scheduled for Aug. 22 and 23 at the Hyatt Regency Chicago Hotel, immediately preceding the CWA convention Aug. 25 and 26 at the Chicago Convention Center. The Guild's schedule includes the following:

- A meeting of the Executive Council on Wednesday, August 20 at 1 p.m.

- A Council of Councils meeting, for those interested in learning how district councils conduct business, Aug. 21 at noon.

- Conference registration Aug. 21 from 2-5:30 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency Chicago Hotel; a new delegates' forum at 3:30 p.m.

- An informal reception Aug. 21 from 7-9 p.m.

The sector conference will start promptly at 9 a.m. Friday, August

22, and will run until 5 p.m. Several workshops will be offered, including "To Grieve or Not to Grieve—Understanding Your Duty of Fair Representation," "Outside Activities and Ethics Policies," Guild Organizing Examples and Strategies," and "Understanding the Family Medical Leave Act." A separate session for human rights coordinators also is being planned.

The meeting will continue at 9 a.m. on Saturday and will adjourn at the completion of business.

Delegates will be asked to designate a committee preference—Finance and Administration; Structure and Policy or Resolutions—on credential forms that will be supplied to each local. Any resolutions to come before the body must be received by Secretary-Treasurer Bernie Lunzer by August 7, 2003.

In brief...

Extradition sought in Iraq deaths

While the Pentagon continues stonewalling demands by TNG-CWA and five other labor groups for an investigation into the U.S. shooting deaths of several journalists in Iraq, the Committee to Protect Journalists reports that there is no evidence justifying the April 8 shelling of the Palestine Hotel, in which two journalists were killed. Now the relatives of a slain cameraman, José Couso, who worked for the Spanish news agency Telcinco, have asked a Spanish judge to extradite three U.S. military officers to stand trial in Spain for war crimes and use of excessive force against civilians.

Anitrust probe into Seattle JOA

The latest chapter in the Seattle JOA saga, as reported by Bill Richards, is a Dept. of Justice investigation into possible anitrust violations. At issue is a JOA provision that assures Hearst of an 80-year payout from The Seattle Times if it voluntarily closes the Post-Intelligencer. Justice also is looking into a side agreement under which Hearst is paying the Blethen family \$10 million over 10 years for a right of first refusal, should the Blethens decide to sell their 50.5% stake in the Times.

CBC convergence rings alarm bells

The Canadian Broadcast Corporation is taking the convergence path, announcing May 16 it will integrate TV, radio and new media news. The Canadian Media Guild has responded with a statement of concern about multitasking and work loads, noting that "the Corporation hasn't yet understood that working for three different media means taking three different approaches to a story, writing in three different styles, and editing in three different formats."

IAPE gets Ms'd for contraceptives

TNG-CWA Local 1096 received a "Ms." prize from the Coalition for Labor Union Women at its recent Hit and Ms. Awards for winning contraceptive coverage in the Dow Jones health care plan. The biggest "hit"? That went to President Bush, for putting millions of civilians in harm's way with his Iraq policy and for his attacks against U.S. working women and families.

Freelancers to get additional fees

Thanks to a recent grievance settlement, freelancers who are members of the Canadian Media Guild will be compensated if their work is posted on the internet without their permission.

The grievance, over web posting of a radio script by the Canadian Broadcasting Corp. of a freelancer's work without additional compensation, was settled just as an arbitration hearing was to start. The Guild says it and the CBC will attempt to identify other freelancers who have been in a similar situation.

St. Paul members call byline strike

Frustrated at management intransigence at the bargaining table, Guild-represented employees of the St. Paul Pioneer Press yanked their names from the paper May 29 in a one-day by-line strike. The last contract expired 10 months ago, but the Knight Ridder-owned paper is still offering raises of just 2.2%-2.7% annually while seeking to increase employees' share of health care premiums to 30% from 20%.

Milwaukee IPO: lots of questions

It's official: Journal communications, the 90% employee-held company that owns the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, plans to go public. But precisely what that means for employees remains unclear, with union officials acknowledging that "some important questions remain." One possible sour note may be sounded for employees who have borrowed against their shares, but at least the company has provided assurances the sale "will be at a favorable tax rate for the employee owners."

Brockton prez gets thesis rave

Betsy Regan, president of the Brockton Newspaper Guild, gets notice in the most recent issue of Labor's Heritage for her senior thesis at the George Meany Center for Labor Studies—The National Labor College. Her paper, "Defining the Procedure for Reporting Health and Safety Violations and What Rules Apply at the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority," catalyzed formation of a safety investigation team by unions at the MBTA.

A second novel for Merc copy ed

Bob Drews, business copy chief at the San Jose Mercury News and a Guild member for more than two decades, has cranked out a second novel. The story of a woman dealing with the death of her father, "Derby Day" has been published by iUniverse Inc. and reportedly is listed online at iuniverse.com and barnesandnoble.com.

How weird is this?

How weird can life get in an AP bureau? Weird enough for one bureau chief to send a written reprimand recently to a desk supervisor—for not wearing shoes in the office.

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Showdown at the Providence corral

ProJo employees vote on contract—poison pill and all—rejected by leadership

Years of bitter confrontation between the Providence Newspaper Guild and the Belo-owned Providence Journal were coming to a head as this issue of The Guild Reporter went to press, with members voting on a company contract offer that includes \$1.2 million less in wage increases than already has been ordered by the National Labor Relations Board.

While agreeing to out the offer before its members, the Guild's executive council voted unanimously to recommend its rejection. Aside from their unhappiness over the proposal's stingy economics, council members objected to the company's last-minute insertion of a "poison pill" provision that makes the entire contract contingent on the NLRB agreeing to expunge the company's 27 convictions of unfair labor practices.

Voting was being conducted June 11 and 12. Nominations for a new local president, to succeed recently deceased president Bob Jagolinzer (see story, page 2) also were being accepted June 11.

The proposed 6-year contract includes

Providence Guild executive board member Kerry Kohring bearded the Belo lion in its own den May 13, attending the company's shareholder meeting in Dallas to point out that its repeated violations of federal labor law also violate the Belo code of ethics.

"Will you please detail for us what actions you and the management committee will take to enforce the Belo code of conduct in this case?" he asked company chairman Robert Decherd.

Decherd's response? That an annual meeting is "not the appropriate place to discuss labor relations."

wage freezes in 2000 and 2002, raises of 3% for 2001 and 6% this year, and guaranteed raises of only 1.5% in 2004 and 2005. "The wage offer falls short of what the NLRB ordered by \$1.2 million—the exact amount of the bonus recently paid to Belo chairman Robert Decherd," observed a statement issued by the local leadership. Moreover, it estimated, the \$1.2 million shortfall approximately equals the Journal's legal costs of fighting the Guild over the past three years.

But as far as the executive council was concerned, the final straw was the eleventh-hour addition of a provision requiring the NLRB to drop all penalties against the com-

pany, and to expunge the record of its convictions, before the contract can take effect. "That means that the company would walk away scot-free, with no penalty and no record of its wrongdoing," observed a disbelieving Tim Schick, the local's administrative officer.

Although the bargaining committee objected to making the entire contract contingent on the federal board's action, Belo remained adamant. And because recent talks have been off the record, in the hope that more progress could be made if neither side were locked into a public position, the committee worried that Guild members didn't know just how punitive the company had

become.

"The Guild leadership at first thought it would be irresponsible to even bring to a vote a contract that is contingent on a third party's action," a committee statement explained. "It's a dangerous precedent. But none of us—least of all the leadership—can tolerate any more secrecy. It's time for members to know all there is to know, and to speak their minds. We urge you to vote 'no.'" As Publisher Howard Sutton said, that will send a message. It's a message the company needs to hear."

Not everything in the proposed contract is bad, the committee observed. The offer includes free parking, wage upgrades for several pre-publishing operators and a strong "evergreen" clause that would allow the union to continue bringing grievances to arbitration after the contract expires. But as the committee also pointed out, "If we're going to have to wait for an NLRB decision anyway, we might as well wait for the one that's likely to result in us getting what the company owes us."

AP, Consumers Union agree on new contracts

Negotiators for the News Media Guild and The Associated Press have reached tentative agreement on a new three-year contract, six months after the previous contract expired. Separately, the New York Guild and Consumers Union reached a tentative agreement on a three-year contract after a five-month hiatus in negotiations.

The AP agreement, which is being mailed to Guild members for ratification, covers more than 1,700 reporters, photographers, broadcasters and other workers. It calls for wage increases of 2.71% effective June 3, 2.98% Dec. 1 and 3.38% a year thereafter. It also increases some location and shift differentials, introduces long-sought domestic partner benefits, retains critical job security language and caps health care premium increases at 10% in each of the first two years, without any "true up" costs in the third.

"Negotiations were tough, but the support and unity of our members resulted in a vastly improved agreement," said Tony Winton, News Media Guild president. "Now it's time for AP to come to a fair agreement with our technician colleagues," he added.

Agreement on a pact at Consumers Union, meanwhile, came after a marathon session of more than 10 hours. The contract includes wage increases of 3% each year, retroactive to Jan. 1, offset to some extent by

higher health care costs. For employees covered by Aetna, for example, family plan members currently paying \$14 a week will see that increase to \$21 in the first year and \$28 in the second; single employees will have their premiums increase from \$3.03 to \$4.55 in the first year and \$6.07 in the second. Other plans will have proportionate increases. Co-pays for drugs and office visits also will increase.

"The impact of the additional health-care cost on the average employee with family coverage will be about one-half of 1% of salary," noted Bill O'Meara, secretary-treasurer of the New York Guild and a member of the bargaining team. "The increase is a far cry from CU's initial proposal that employees pay 20% of total health care costs."

Other contract improvements include a reduction from 11 years to 10 for employees to achieve "protected" status, which precludes most layoffs; health care coverage for domestic partners; and night and weekend differentials. A company proposal to go to every-other-week paydays was blocked, and the defined-benefit pension plan remains intact.

The unit also succeeded in adding a more arcane—but increasingly vital—provision to the contract, known as a "successors and assigns" clause, that makes the contract legally binding on anyone who might buy Consumers Union.



Thanks from Chinese workers

On behalf of 150 embattled workers at the Los Angeles-based Chinese Daily News, TNG-CWA President Linda Foley and CWA District 4 Vice President Jeff Rechenbach (at left) present Ohio Rep. Sherrod Brown with a redwood plaque thanking him in English and Chinese for his strong support. Although Chinese Daily News workers voted for TNG-CWA representation more than two years ago, the newspaper's Taiwanese owners have refused to recognize the union and have waged a campaign of fear and illegal firings to try to break the workers' will. Brown was so moved by their solidarity that he memorialized their struggle in a statement in the Congressional Record. Foley told Brown the workers took up a collection to have the plaque made.

NLRB says Journal Newspapers broke labor law

The National Labor Relations Board's regional office has charged that the Journal Newspapers' firing of eight writers and the closing of two Journal offices in Maryland last December was motivated by anti-union animus and violated federal law. Issued May 29, the complaint seeks the reopening of both newsrooms and reinstatement of the fired employees, which usually includes back pay. A hearing before an administrative law judge has been set for July 21.

The eight reporters and editorial assistants for the Prince George's Journal and Montgomery County Journal were dismissed on Dec. 2—just 10 days before a scheduled NLRB-supervised election on the issue of representation by the Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild. Management

claimed that economics was behind the pre-holiday firings of all but one of the newspapers' entire news reporting staff, which occurred without notice or severance.

At the Guild's request, the labor board suspended the election, which would have included 14 editorial employees of the two Maryland Journals and about 35 editorial workers at the Northern Virginia Journal, where union organizing had not progressed as far as in Maryland. The Guild argued that management had rendered a fair election impossible because of the unfair labor practices and the fear engendered by firing union supporters.

The labor board's Region 5 director, Wayne R. Gold, also charged that Journal management sought to discourage the

unionization effort by giving raises to Northern Virginia Journal employees while withholding them at the Prince George's and Montgomery journals.

The complaint charged that management illegally "created the impression that employees' union activities were under surveillance." It also charged that two "management consultants" hired to conduct meetings with employees falsely stated that the company could not give pay raises during a union organizing campaign. The consultants also "made threats of futility" if employees voted for the union, meaning that the employer could illegally stonewall employee efforts to bargain a union contract, the complaint said.

"The labor board complaint against the Journal, nearly six months after the firings, is

an important step in what could be an extremely long legal process," said Calvin G. Zon, an organizer for the Washington-Baltimore Newspaper Guild. "Instead of continuing to waste Journal resources in trying to defend an indefensible case, Ryan Phillips should do the right thing and follow the labor board's recommendations to rehire the workers with back pay and reopen their offices."

The union, meanwhile, is pressing the two counties' elected officials to conclude the review they promised last January of the propriety of the Journals' status as newspapers of public record, which gives them the opportunity to publish lucrative legal notices. "Journal advertisers," Zon added, "also should also think twice about doing business with this newspaper company."

Six labor candidates for

By Andy Zipse
Editor, The Guild Reporter

Left Out: Reds and America's Industrial Unions. By Judith Stepan-Norris and Maurice Zeitlin. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003.) 375 pp. \$27 (paperback)

Newsworkers: Toward a History of the Rank and File. Edited by Hanno Hardt and Bonnie Brennen. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995.) 237 pp. (paperback)

Readers of The Guild Reporter who dip into the "From the Morgue," column on page 8 have an inkling, at least, of the furious political battle gripping the American labor movement 50 years ago. The American Newspaper Guild was squarely within the mainstream of the Congress of Industrial Unions, with a strong Communist faction at the national level and at least two major locals—New York and Los Angeles—led by Communists.

In the post World War II-era, of course, being a Communist was a distinct liability. The Soviet Union's occupation of Eastern Europe provided fear-mongers like Joe McCarthy with abundant ammunition, as did its rapid development of nuclear weapons, confirming it as a military threat despite its distant geography. On the economic front, meanwhile, war's end marked the end of corporate America's truce with labor and the start of a two-pronged campaign to discredit labor's most effective leaders: the militants who proclaimed that organized labor's strength was based in shop-floor activism.

One element of this campaign was a divide-and-conquer strategy, designating the craft-centered American Federation of Labor—always suspicious of the CIO's "wall-to-wall" approach to organizing—as the "good" union federation. Unlike the CIO, with its proclivity for wildcat strikes and other disruptive tactics, the AFL unions could be counted on to be "responsible." The AFL's "business unionism" reduced labor relations to a straightforward contractual relationship, concerned almost entirely with maximization of members' income and their general welfare. The approach was summed up aptly by Dave Beck, president of the Teamsters, when he observed: "Unions are big business. Why should truck drivers and bottle washers be allowed to make big decisions affecting union policy? Would any corporation allow it?"

Corporate America's other strategy was to demonize the Communist elements that had made the CIO such an organizing powerhouse. On the one hand, Communist union leaders could be painted as potentially subversive agents of a hostile foreign power. On the other, they could be tarred as totalitarian despots cast in the mold of "Uncle" Joe Stalin, the very antithesis of the democratic values and individual liberty that had made America great. Communist union leaders, in other words, were the rot within the house of labor that had to be rooted out. The republic itself was at stake.

And so, in a propaganda coup that is still echoed today, the English language was inverted so that up became down and black became white. Under the Taft-Hartley Act, unions whose leaders did not sign non-Communist affidavits were exposed to NLRB decertification and raiding by rivals. Union leaders who did sign the affidavits, on the other hand, frequently were prosecuted for perjury. Life for many union activists became a relentless round of court cases and

lost jobs, resulting in declining health, disrupted families and widespread demoralization. So much for winning hearts and minds in the American marketplace of ideas.

The enormous effectiveness of this cam-

The CIO's Communists were an often contentious, brawling lot, but most of all they were engaged in the life of their unions in a way that the heavy-handed AFL leadership methodically discouraged.

Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin chart the differences between the two camps along numerous axes: whether leadership elections were contested, the existence of factions, the presence (or, often, absence) of women and minorities in the leadership, the degree of union constitutional protection for dissent. Without exception, they note, the unions most heavily influenced by Communist leadership also were the most democratic. "Democracy in the CIO's international unions, much as democracy in nation-states, was rooted in insurgency and nourished by radicalism," they observe.

(The Guild, too small to receive significant mention in a study looking at 36 CIO unions, nevertheless is singled out as one of 10 internationals in which the incumbent leadership "regularly faced serious internal opposition," honoring those democratic tendencies. And while the Guild is classified by the authors as a fundamentally anti-Communist union, it was "the only international union in the anti-Communist camp with a committee against discrimination.")

Ultimately, the witch-hunts of the time dismembered the movement—a disintegration further promoted by the left-wing's confused response. But the final, shattering blow came in April, 1956, when Nikita Khrushchev's "secret speech" to the Soviet party's Twentieth Congress was disclosed, revealing beyond equivocation the details of Stalin's decades-long reign of terror. For the many American Communists who had joined the party for idealistic reasons, Khrushchev's speech confirmed everything their capitalist opponents had charged, and more. The irony is that in driving the final nail into the coffin of American labor Communist influence, the revelations also interred the most democratic and populist wing of the American labor movement.

For an even longer step back in time to understand how American journalists—and their union—reached their current incarnation, a most useful guide is Hanno Hardt's and Bonnie Brennen's volume of collected essays, *Newsworkers: Toward a History of the Rank and File*.

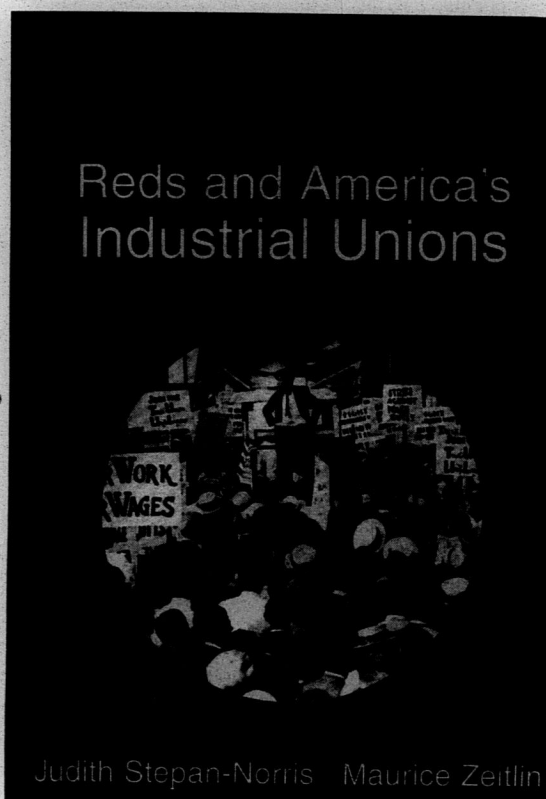
The overall thrust is summarized in Hardt's introductory essay, in which he observes that the history of media workers "remains obscured by its precarious location among intellectual traditions and academic disciplines." But that doesn't pose a problem just for academics: "history as discourse confers power," Hardt maintains, "because whatever 'has a history . . . acquires

acknowledged legitimacy; therefore the way to acquire legitimacy is to invent or discover history."

Questions of power and legitimacy may seem abstruse to journalists fixated on the upheavals at The New York Times or other *crises du jour*, but they in fact undergird such contemporary issues as the steady encroachment on journalists' lives by their corporate employers under the guise of "ethics." Indeed, it's worth remembering that the Guild's constitution specifically states that the union exists, in part, "to raise the standards of journalism and ethics of the industry," thereby reserving for journalists themselves the right to determine what is and is not ethical, right or appropriate; publishers who tread this ground should be viewed as trespassers.

But, of course, rights that remain unrecognized go unclaimed, underscoring the importance of historical perspective. *News Workers* fills some, if not all, of the gaps in contemporary understanding through a smartly assembled group of eight essays, including one that specifically examines the nonconformist tradition in Canada. Two in particular are worth noting here because they specifically address the newspaper industry's class structure. Marianne Salcetti, for example, describes the political changes caused by newspaper industrialization, when it "behooved publishers as part of that corporate echelon to have a news product that reflected an antilabor bias and was produced by workers who themselves were not members of a union."

William S. Solomion, meanwhile, traces the development of hierarchical divisions in the newsroom labor and the increasingly autocratic leadership style this fostered. For



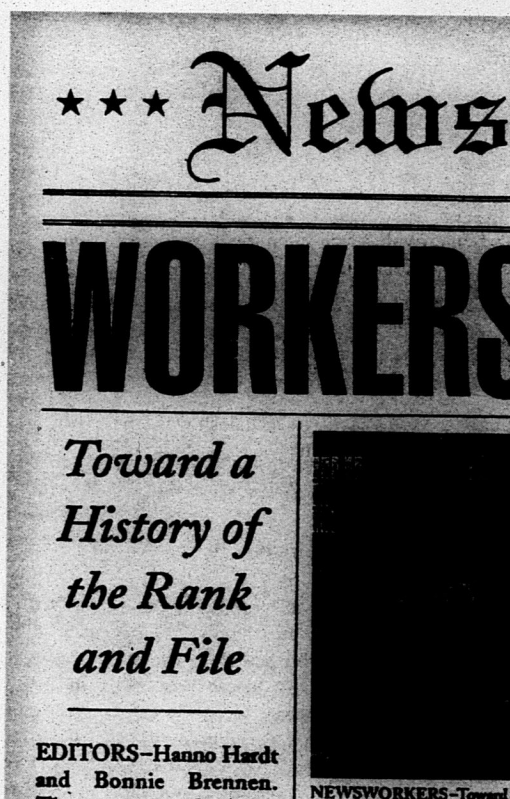
Judith Stepan-Norris Maurice Zeitlin

paign, culminating in the shattered remnants of the CIO merging with the AFL in 1955, is visible on several levels today. One is the lingering "triumph" of business unionism, which by defanging labor laid the groundwork for a decades-long erosion of union effectiveness and vitality. Another, arguably, is the continued mischaracterization of the media as "liberal" and of the lack of a vigorous response by journalists' groups.

But the third, most skillfully explored by Judith Stepan-Norris and Maurice Zeitlin, is the persistent belief that Communist-dominated unions had perverted democratic procedures and traditions—indeed, that Communists must have manipulated institutional procedures and resources to gain control. And, once having gained control, that Communists must have unleashed an arsenal of unseemly weapons, including personal defamation and intrigue, to stay in power—for how else could they have gained such a prominent position?

The pervasive integration of this bit of conventional wisdom into the American fabric is seen most readily in the complete lack—prior to this study—of any empirical test of its validity. "Until our analysis, the mid-1950's lament by the authors of *Union Democracy* was still correct," Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin write. "No one has attempted either a qualitative or quantitative analysis of the relationship between diffuse political (that is, socialist or Communist) or specific business-union ideologies and the presence or absence of political conflict (and thus of factionalism and democracy) within trade unions."

Indeed, as this sometimes methodologically didactic book amply illustrates, the CIO's Communists viewed unions as "a weapon for the liberation of the working class." The resulting politicization of everyday life, transcending the issues subject to collective bargaining, encouraged precisely the kind of participatory democracy that ostensibly defines the American experience.



example, Solomon offers, copy editors increasingly saw their status shift from manager to laborer. "Journalists long have tended to be motivated primarily by a sense of public service," he observes. "Yet, the reality of newswriting for the commercial press has virtually always belied its noble ideology as voiced by publishers."

Newsworkers, as an older university press imprint, is hard to find but worth the search.

summer reading lists

By Steve Early
International Rep, CWA

Writing The Wrongs: Eva Valesh and the Rise of Labor Journalism. By Elizabeth Faue. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002.) 249 pp. \$25. (hardcover)

Rebel Pen: The Writings of Mary Heaton Vorse. Edited by Dee Garrison. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1985.) 345 pp. \$26. (paperback)

Mary Heaton Vorse: The Life of an American Insurgent. By Dee Garrison. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989.) 377 pp. \$18 (paperback)

Strike! By Mary Heaton Vorse. With an introduction by Dee Garrison. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991.) 236 pp. \$18.95 (paperback)

Fifty years ago, there were scores of labor editors and reporters—many from working class backgrounds themselves—who specialized in the subject of unions, contract negotiations, strikes and industrial relations in general. Today, “labor news”—such as it is—tends to be buried in the business pages of major dailies. White collar workplace trends, as defined by newsroom Yuppies, receive far more ink than shop-floor struggles by blue collar workers or even the activities of the institutional labor movement. There are only a few remaining experienced labor reporters (like Tom Robbins at the Village Voice) and virtually no labor-oriented columnists, with the exception of Juan Gonzalez at The New York Daily News.

Dee Garrison's multi-volume excavation of the life and work of Mary Heaton Vorse and Elizabeth Faue's new biography of Eva Valesh remind us that labor writing once had a much higher profile in the popular press, in periods when working class struggle commanded greater societal attention. The now little known “rebel pens” of Valesh and Vorse were deployed to great effect, in overlapping fashion, beginning in the 1880s and continuing until the late 1930s, from the heyday of the Knights of Labor to the triumph of the CIO.

These four books by or about the two women provide a rich sampling of participatory labor journalism (or, in the case, of Vorse's novel *Strike!*, fiction closely based on it). Both writers were activists as well as observers, plying their trade as part of working class organizations or political parties that mounted serious challenges to the status quo of their day. And while Valesh was “the daughter of a workingman” and Vorse hailed from a wealthy New England family, they were—in their prime—equally “embedded” in the movements they wrote about.

Like a 19th century Barbara Ehrenreich, Valesh was hired by the St. Paul Globe to do undercover reporting on working women who were the “Nickel and Dime” of her time. The series was published under the pen name of “Eva Gay,” when Valesh was only 22, and “introduced readers to the lives of garment workers, laundresses, cigar-makers, seamstresses, domestics, operatives in woolen knitting mills and boot and shoe factories, telephone and telegraph operators, bookbinders, stenographers, and shop women.” Her accounts helped spark the interest of labor advocates and middle-class reformers, stressing that “the appalling conditions under which most women worked were amenable to change”—if the “working girls” themselves took action on their own behalf.

The girls did just that at Shotwell's, one of the garment sweatshops Valesh had infiltrated. When workers there struck in 1888, it was “the first of many labor conflicts in

which she would play the role of instigator, organizer, and reporter,” Faue observes. Valesh's involvement in the struggle led to her becoming an organizer for the Knights and labor editor of The Globe. She also published *A Tale of the Twin Cities*, a popular novel about the street car motorman's strike that convulsed all of Minneapolis and St. Paul in 1889. Like Vorse's lightly fictionalized account of the labor war in Gastonia fifty years later, *Tale* was “the medium for a political message—about the necessity of class solidarity and the increasingly vicious conflict between the classes.”

But while the trajectory of Valesh's subsequent career overlapped with Vorse's, it also sharply diverged from it. Valesh rose to prominence “as an authentic working class voice,” but used her labor writing and public speaking acclaim to fuel her own upward social mobility. She soon left the Globe for “more lucrative endeavors” at the Minneapolis Tribune and, later, at William Randolph Hearst's New York Journal. Along the way she also acquired—and subsequently shed—a husband, cigar-maker Frank Valesh.

In 1900, Valesh's alliance with Samuel Gompers, president of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), resulted in her becoming—in defiance of the gender conventions of her era—his “right hand man,” working behind the scenes as editor of the American Federationist. She held that position for a decade, even as Gompers claimed public credit for her work, experiencing the frustration of union headquarters wordsmiths ever since. Her “assigned duties were almost always performed in the shadow of the great man” (who considered the Federationist to be his “personal organ”).

Valesh's association with Gompers put her in the orbit of the National Civil Federation, an early 20th century vehicle for labor-management cooperation that Eugene Debs once described as “a beast of prey, which tells its victims, ‘our interests are one,’ and then devours them.” For Valesh, it opened doors to an “elite network” of “wealthy club women and patrons.” She quickly became a popular speaker in their social and political circles, acting as “an important link between the organized working class and upper-middle class activists” who wanted to improve factory conditions.

The contradictions between Valesh's labor movement roots and what Faue calls her “new class identity” became painfully clear during a massive left-led strike by female garment workers in New York City. Offering her services to the reform-minded Women's Trade Union League, Valesh was put in charge of pickets and later served on the legal and publicity committees. She also helped organize “the Mink Brigade,” a group of affluent female “picket-watchers” that was formed to stave off police brutality and “unwarranted arrests.”

However, when the AFL-brokered a settlement of the 1909 walkout, the immigrant shirt waist makers rejected the deal. Valesh condemned their decision, threatening to launch a “campaign against socialism” because it made “ignorant foreigners discontented, set them against the government, [and made] them want to tear it down.” As Faue notes, her public denunciation of the strikers was “seen as a fundamental betrayal” and her labor career never recovered.

Despite her more privileged background, Vorse—in contrast—maintained a life-long

commitment to labor radicalism after she embraced it at age 38, when she was already the single-mother of two children and a well-known writer of “light romantic fiction.” A former art student who had been disinherited by her family for her bohemian tendencies, Vorse by 1912 had become a leading denizen of Greenwich Village—an activist in the suffrage and women's peace movements, a founding editor of *The Masses* and part of the avant-garde group that started the Provincetown Players.

What transformed her career that year was her involvement in the “Bread and

lowed the southern wave of textile mill walk-outs to the piedmont region of North Carolina, scene of the doomed uprising against “industrial feudalism” so movingly described in *Strike!* In both her novel about Gastonia and the reportage in *Rebel Pen*, Vorse captured the behind-the-scenes tensions among radical organizers sent from the North to support strikers faced with mass evictions from company housing, vigilante attacks on their tent colony, murder and conspiracy indictments, and the hostile intervention of the National Guard.

When the Depression started, Vorse covered militant protests by the Unemployed Councils and their national “Hunger March” on Washington, D.C. in 1932. She returned to the Steel Valley in 1936 to cover the successful organizing drives of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee (SWOC) and was injured during the shooting of union pickets at Republic Steel in Youngstown. In February, 1937, she was in Flint, Michigan, where her dispatches on the sit-downers' struggle against General Motors highlighted the crucial role played by the UAW's “women's auxiliary,” with its “babies and banners.”

Despite her personal involvement in many of these fights, Vorse's writing was notably “free of political dogma and strident rhetoric,” in contrast to what Garrison calls “the crude Daily Worker style of harangues and exaggerations.” She let the facts—and the workers—speak for themselves in her work, particularly in the pieces written for non-labor audiences. According to Garrison, “She cared little for abstraction. She judged people by what they did, not by what they said, by their action, not their theory. She always understood the distinction between the immense club of official power and the tiny barb of the radical few.”

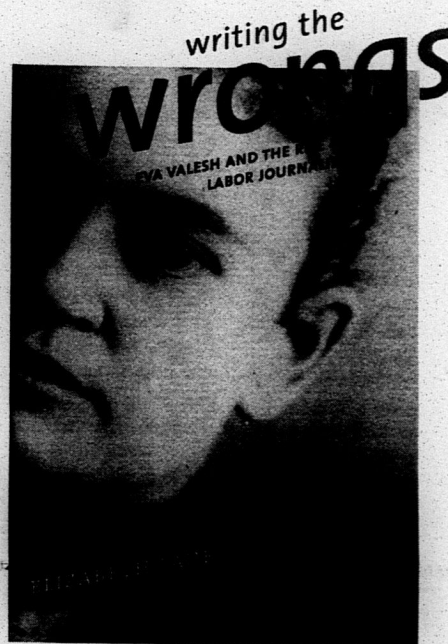
Unfortunately, labor journalism—the field in which Vorse made her name—“effectively expired with the end of the great labor wars” and the onset of McCarthyism, and Vorse was forced into “semi-retirement” in the 1950s. In her final years she slipped into penurious obscurity while living on Cape Cod, where she opposed the Vietnam war and supported local environmental causes until her death in 1965, at age 91.

(Valesh's period of withdrawal from public life was even more protracted before she died at 90, in 1956. After divorcing her debt-ridden second husband in the mid-1920s, she was unable or unwilling to resume a career in journalism. At age 58 she renewed her Typographical union card and spent the remainder of her working life correcting galley proofs at The New York Times.)

For those still trying to bring workers' sacrifices and struggles to life on the printed page, the challenge of labor journalism remains what it was in Valesh and Vorse's day. Labor-oriented writers should, in Garrison's words, seek to “faithfully render the messy complexities of human ideals and behavior” within the working class, “while also imparting a vision of a better, more democratic and egalitarian future.”

The pallid institutional propaganda put out by most unions today—plus their skimpy mainstream media coverage—usually does neither, so there's plenty of room for experimentation and improvement by new literary or journalistic voices. Whether they arise on the left or, better yet, from within the ranks of labor, let's hope they can soon revive the proud tradition of writing with a “rebel pen.”

[A substantially longer version of this review will appear in a forthcoming issue of “Against The Current,” a quarterly journal.]



Roses” strike, a largely spontaneous uprising of 25,000 immigrant textile workers in Lawrence, Mass., aided by the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). When the walk-out began, Vorse reported, only a few millhands belonged to any union, radical or conservative; it was “not their strike . . . but the indignant expression of people who considered their wages had been cut below the living point.”

After Lawrence, she managed to be at the scene of every major union dispute for the next quarter of a century. On the labor beat, she freelanced for mainstream dailies, mass circulation magazines, left-wing journals and labor publications—once even covering the same strike simultaneously for the New York Globe and the Blast, an anarchist paper. Thanks to the editorial work of Garrison, a history professor at Rutgers, *Rebel Pen* contains a vivid collection of Vorse's front line dispatches from around the country, many of which, in the 1930s, were distributed by Federated Press, a labor news service.

Vorse's association with the IWW continued to World War I, when she worked with its leading female organizer, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, during an iron ore miners strike in the Mesabi range of Minnesota. In 1919, she served in Pittsburgh as a volunteer publicist for the nationwide work-stoppage by 350,000 steelworkers led by William Z. Foster. As an organizer for the Amalgamated Clothing Workers in 1920, she rallied workers and exposed conditions in shirt factories in eastern Pennsylvania. Throughout the 1920s, she covered the rank-and-file insurgencies of coal miners attempting to overthrow the autocratic regime of UMW President John L. Lewis.

In 1926 she wrote about the “War in Passaic”—a Communist-led textile workers strike in New Jersey—and in 1929 she fol-

Labor round-up

More protection keyed to gender

More cities and counties passed laws in 2002 barring employment discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity than in any previous year, according to a new study by the Human Rights Campaign. Fifteen local jurisdictions prohibited job discrimination based on sexual orientation, up from eight in 2001, and 16 passed measures covering gender identity, compared with five in 2001. The study also found the number of employers offering domestic-partner health benefits increased 16% in 2002. "The State of the Workplace for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Americans 2002" can be found on the Human Rights Campaign website at www.hrc.org.

NLRB defends corporate 'free speech'

By a 3-2 party-line vote, the National Labor Relations Board has instructed its attorney, Arthur Rosenfeld, to oppose parts of a California labor neutrality law that was approved more than two years ago. The law, banning employers who receive state funds from using that money to "assist, promote or oppose" union organizing, was challenged by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and several corporations. The U.S. District Court sided with those groups in January, 2002, ruling that parts of the law violate employers' rights to free speech.—*Press Associates, Inc.*

Unemployment picture deteriorates

As the unemployment rate inched up to a nine-year high in May, hitting 6.1%, the percentage of jobless workers who have been out of work for six months or longer has doubled in the past three years—from 11% in 2000 to 21.8% this past April, according to a new report from the Economic Policy Institute. Moreover, the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics has revised the formula by which it calculates job-loss statistics—and the result is an even greater erosion than previously reported. Instead of the previously reported loss of 2.1 million jobs overall (and 2.7 million jobs in the private-sector) since the beginning of the recession, in March 2001, the losses through the end of May were 2.5 million and 3.0 million, respectively. Both in terms of numbers and percentages, more private-sector jobs have been lost over this downturn than in any prior comparable period in post-WWII history.

Unions: a threat to national security?

Having stripped 180,000 federal employees of their Civil Service bargaining rights last year, when it authorized creation of the Dept. of Homeland Security, Congress is now moving to do the same for the 746,000 civilian employees of the Dept. of Defense. The proposal is being pushed by Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, who insists he needs more "flexibility"—often a euphemism for "lack of accountability"—in hiring, firing, pay, promotion and labor disputes. Such flexibility, he has explained, "is nothing less than a national security requirement."

AFTRA, SAG members vote on merger

Members of the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (AFTRA) and the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) are receiving mail ballots, due back by June 30, to decide whether the two unions will consolidate and affiliate. The proposed merger—the 15th time in 64 years it is being attempted—requires approval of 60% of the votes in each union; both national executive boards approved it by overwhelming margins.

Overtime pay safe—for the moment

Republican leaders in the House of Representatives, reading the handwriting on the wall, withdrew the so-called Family Time Flexibility Act (H.R. 1119) on June 5. The measure would have allowed businesses to offer compensatory time instead of overtime pay to an estimated 80 million workers. Opponents warn, however, that the floor vote merely has been postponed while bill sponsors attempt to round up additional support. The action also doesn't affect a separate rules-change effort by the Dept. of Labor that would reclassify journalists and other white-collar workers as "professionals," exempting them from overtime pay.

Labor arts festivals on both coasts

Labor-oriented festivals of films, folk singers and street theater are coming up on both coasts. The Great Labor Arts Exchange and the Conference on Creative Organizing, sponsored by the Labor Heritage Foundation, will be at the George Meany Center in Silver Spring, Md., on June 22-24. The conference is to include sessions on creative brainstorming, using the arts to energize union campaigns, attracting media attention and integrating pop culture into organizing drives. LaborFest 2003 will open in San Francisco on July 5 and run through July 31. The International Longshore and Warehouse Union is lead sponsor of the west coast fling, but other participating Bay Area locals and groups include CWA, OPEIU, UTU, the National Writers Union, The Newspaper Guild and Pride at Work.—*Press Associates, Inc.*

Union leaders warn of bargaining crisis . . .

Nearly 100 congressional staffers turned out May 29 for a briefing on collective bargaining and organizing rights conducted by the AFL-CIO, CWA and workers from other unions. The Capitol Hill session was part of an overall drive to combat a crisis in collective bargaining that has left millions unemployed or in jobs with little security and eroding benefits.

CWA Executive Vice President Larry Cohen described the union's successful experience with card check and neutrality at SBC and Cingular as an alternative to the broken NLRB election process.

"We now have a National Labor Relations Board that is hollowed out, that can't make any decisions," Cohen said, explaining that it takes at least a year to get elections certified. "In cases where a ballot is necessary, employers can delay elections and can delay bargaining for up to five years," he added, citing the ongoing struggle to obtain recognition at the Chinese Daily News, where several journalists have been fired for organizing activity.

Ironically, the National Labor Relations Act, which governs the NLRB, was intended to promote collective bargaining. Instead, employers have learned to game the system by hiring union-busting consultants to wage anti-representation campaigns, file endless appeals and harass and intimidate union sympathizers.

"The overall crisis can't get much worse," Cohen said, pointing out that nearly 40% of workers in Canada are covered by collective bargaining, compared with less than 15% in the U.S.; in several European countries the proportion exceeds 80%. Members of Congress, he added, should support voluntary recognition agreements and changes in labor law to create a level playing field for workers.

Geoconda Arguello Kline, president of the Culinary Workers, HERE Local 226 in Las Vegas,

described for congressional staffers how employers intimidate immigrant workers who would otherwise vote to have a union. Her union has gone from 25,000 to 50,000 members through card check agreements with several new hotels, she said.

"We have to think about this: How we can bring these benefits to more families? You can only realize the American dream when you are free," she said, pointing out that workers who are free to form unions bring a higher level of productivity to companies.

Rita Chitwood, an organizer of newly formed Auto Workers' Local 5286 in Gastonia, N.C., described how five years ago the Freightliner Co. brought in its CEO to talk to workers in captive audience meetings. "He was very intimidating," she recalled. "People were scared. You're not going to sign a (representation) card if people tell you you're going to lose your job."

Diamler Chrysler took over the company and agreed to organizing neutrality. "We had our card check earlier this year, and we're still building our union, but the company did the right thing," Chitwood added.

Following a lively question-and-answer period, the staffers were urged to encourage their representatives and senators to speak out for collective bargaining and organizing rights in their states or districts. Cohen also urged lawmakers to join other community leaders on Workers Rights Boards, created by Jobs with Justice to hear cases and bring public scrutiny to union-busting in organizing drives, and to participate in "Human Rights Day" events CWA and other unions are planning for Dec. 10.

(On a related note: all TNG and other CWA locals are being asked by Cohen to pass resolutions on collective bargaining and organizing rights, similar to one passed by the TNG-CWA Executive Council earlier this year, and send copies to his office in Washington, D.C.)

. . . and impending collapse of U.S. health care system

By Mark Gruenberg
Staff Writer, Press Associates Inc.

A coalition of top union and business leaders is urging the federal government to reform the out-of-control, overly expensive U.S. health care system before its costs bring the entire economy crashing down while depriving almost everyone but the rich of needed care.

Whether those dire warnings will hit home with the Bush administration and the GOP-run Congress is questionable, although leaders of the National Coalition on Health Care said they detect rising public demand for comprehensive health care reform.

"Without action from Washington soon, you're going to see a stronger-than-ever reaction from America's working families and retirees," warned one leader, CALPERS President Sean Harrigan.

In a Washington, D.C. press conference May 20, CWA President Morton Bahr, Harrigan—whose public worker pension fund is the nation's largest private health benefits provider—and other coalition leaders noted that health care now comprises 15% of the nation's economy. And that share is rising rapidly. "We have the most ineffective health care delivery system in the world and nobody seems to be stepping forward to address this," Harrigan said.

A study released by the group concludes that the costs of inaction are worse than costs of proposed changes. Among the coalition's proposals are drug cost controls and a ban on cost-shifting, in which some companies force workers to pick up the tab or resort to public health care. Other proposals include universal health insurance based on the existing system; legislation to mandate better quality of health care delivery; creation of "a more viable and equitable mechanism of financing;" and simpler administration.

Coalition leaders warned that despite their best efforts at cost-cutting, in collective bargaining and in mass purchases of medical products, the health care system's problems and costs have become too large for business and labor to solve by themselves. "While

health care costs surge, corporate profits have been depressed, average wages are flat and unemployment has been rising," Bahr observed.

Workers are angry enough about health care costs to strike, Bahr added, recalling the two-day strike by 15,000 IUE-CWA workers at GE in January. During that strike against the most-profitable U.S. firm, a police car hit and fatally injured one worker. Bahr also cited a 17-week strike in 1989 by 60,000 CWA workers against a NYNEX attempt at health care cost-shifting. The workers won.

Health care is not just a problem for the jobless and the 41 million-plus uninsured—a number the coalition estimates will exceed 51 million within three years. It's also a problem even for large companies. "At SBC, our health care costs have increased to \$2.2 billion, an increase of \$740 million, or 50%, in the last three years alone," said former Commerce Secretary William Daley, President of the telecom giant. He expects another billion-dollar increase in the next three years.

To counter those increases, SBC cut health care plan costs by eliminating options and slashed \$1.6 billion in other spending on items such as service maintenance. And it cut 25,000 workers. "The present course is unsustainable. Employers cannot continue to absorb double-digit increases in health care spending, year after year," Daley said.

"There's a huge problem in cost-shifting," Harrigan emphasized, in response to a question that cited Wal-Mart as a prime offender. "There are employers in a number of industries who cannot compete with employers who don't provide health coverage."

Coalition member UFCW is leading a national campaign to unionize the notoriously anti-worker Wal-Mart. Other coalition members include the AFL-CIO, AFSCME, AFTRA, the Teachers, the Bakery Workers, IATSE, the Machinists, IBEW, the Teamsters, IFPTE, the National Consumers League, the NEA, PACE, the Screen Actors Guild, SEIU, the Transport Workers, UNITE, the Auto Workers, the Steel Workers and the Utility Workers.



LOOKING AHEAD

Blair a product of his culture

By Linda Foley, President

We saw vividly this past month how the misdeeds of one reporter could set off a chain reaction that ultimately resulted in a shake-up at the very top of the world's most prestigious newspaper.

So far, the misrepresentations perpetrated by New York Times reporter Jayson Blair and their fallout have led to his own dismissal, the resignation of a Pulitzer Prize winning reporter and the demise of the paper's executive and managing editors. The "Old Grey Lady" has been shaken to the very core of her journalistic existence.

And it couldn't come at a worse time. The Times was already a prime target for those who denounce balanced reporting and the airing of dissident voices as proof that credible media demonstrate a "liberal bias."

But no matter how many heads ultimately roll over this scandal or how many other

Jayson Blairs out there are exposed and eradicated, the credibility of journalism won't be restored until the recently tolerated culture of deceptive and manipulative news coverage is reversed.

Consider this: While the journalistic world was obsessing over why no one caught the fact that Blair had described tobacco fields which did not exist at the West Virginia home of Pfc. Jessica Lynch, reports surfaced that the story of her dramatic rescue may have been faked, or at the very least exaggerated.

And while the New York Times sent a team of investigative reporters to uncover errors reported by Blair so they could be revealed and corrected in a four-page Sunday Times exposé, no news organization yet has investigated adequately whether the Bush administration actually had intelligence that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction or if they just used it for a good cover story.

According to the Times, Blair apparently went to some lengths to make his bosses and readers believe he was actually at the scene of various stories when, in reality, he wrote them without ever leaving New York City. Now where did he get the idea he could get away with that?

Maybe the inspiration came from Clear Channel Communications and Sinclair Broadcast Group, both media giants that go out of their way to convince listeners and

viewers their news operations are actually located in the cities and towns they service. In reality, however, Sinclair's News Central produces "local" TV news for 62 stations in places like Flint, Mich., Rochester, N.Y., Raleigh, N.C. and Oklahoma City from a mega-studio located in a Baltimore suburb. Clear Channel, as we learned during the recent public debates on media ownership, uses deejays in centralized studios to feed what is portrayed as local programming to stations hundreds, or maybe thousands, of miles away.

In a recent Washington Post story about Sinclair's operation, a News Central weathercaster said, "We still have the same responsibility to be as accurate as possible, even if it's an illusion that we're experiencing the same weather as our viewers." (Well, okay then!)

If the recent ruling by the Federal Communications Commission to deregulate media ownership is any indication, this type of news production is endorsed by most, if not all, of the major news industry corporations as well as the FCC itself, which is responsible for promoting localism on the public airwaves.

No wonder the public grows more and more cynical about what the media feed it. A recent CNN/Gallup poll revealed that only 36% of the American people trust the news they read, see and hear. That means 64% don't trust it. Not too long ago, those numbers were reversed—but that was before "convergence" gave us Clear Channel and News Central.

You can't blame the deep erosion of credibility on Jayson Blair alone.

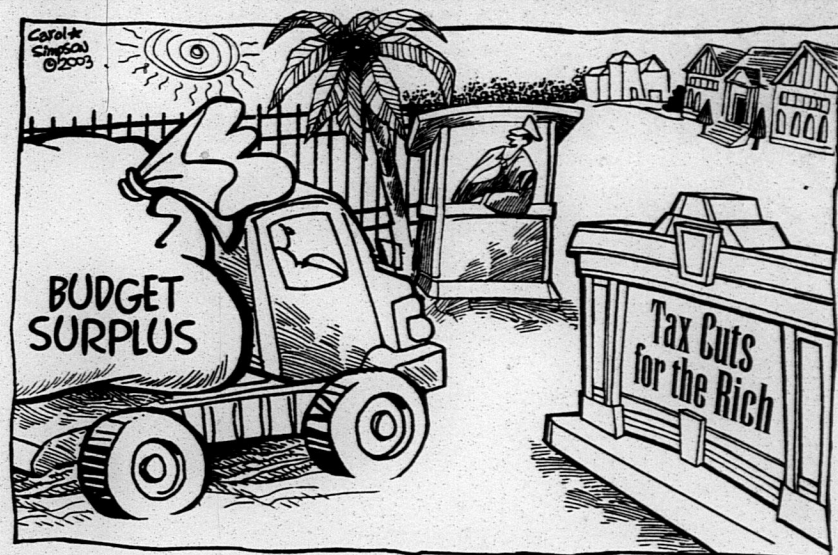
A few more heads may roll at the New York Times before Blair's 15 minutes of infamy are over. (If he writes a book, he may get extra minutes.) Other news organizations no doubt are now on the lookout for deceptive reporting on their own news pages. But cynicism about the news will continue to fester so long as the corporate media culture encourages and rewards news production that both short-changes and manipulates the public's right to know.

A few top editors and reporters falling on their swords won't make a dent in the credibility gap that afflicts today's news organizations. That will take wholesale regime change.

National Labor Relations Act. As more and more unions are forced to resort to "street heat," it is important that every union member—regardless of the affiliation—participate in these demonstrations for the rights of the working classes.

It is also interesting that nobody ever says anything when editors and publishers attend Chamber of Commerce dinners.

—R. Victor Stewart,
Past President Local 34, Albany, NY



Privatizing the budget surplus.

LOOKING ASKANCE

Newspapers not above playing numbers game

By Andy Zipser
Editor, The Guild Reporter

Newspapers attract people who like to manipulate words, but the real action is in the numbers.

The classic example is the two sets of numbers used to describe a newspaper's financial condition. Shareholders routinely get the best gloss, with revenues and profits mounting steadily upward. Let them sit down at a bargaining table, however, and newspaper publishers suddenly are beset with enormous tribulations demanding—of course—that employees accept a wage freeze, pay higher health care premiums, forego a 401(k) match or whatever the sacrifice *du jour* may require.

But there's another kind of numbers game, now being played out on opposing coasts, that illuminates a much bigger hoax: the myth of the stand-alone newspaper.

In Seattle, the Hearst Corp. would have us believe that the Post-Intelligencer simply couldn't survive the dissolution of a joint operating agreement with the Seattle Times. This is the same Hearst Corp., mind you, whose web site proclaims it as "one of the largest diversified communications companies," with "major interests" in "magazines, newspaper and business publishing, cable networks, television and radio broadcasting, internet businesses, tv production and distribution, newspaper features distribution, and real estate."

This also is the Hearst Corp. that was willing to throw \$60 million at the Fang family in San Francisco to engineer its way out of a joint operating agreement—and into possession of the San Francisco Chronicle. But the Post-Intelligencer is for some reason different. The Post-Intelligencer is a failure-to-thrive property whose only life support is The Seattle Times. Yank its tubes and the pathetic thing will die, its behemoth corporate parent simply unable to provide the help it needs.

Meanwhile, 3,000 miles away, the 600 Guild-represented employees of The Baltimore Sun have been in difficult contract bargaining since April 29; the current contract expires June 24. Management, among other demands, is insisting that employees pick up nearly half the cost of their health care premiums; it also has yet to say how much—if

any—of a salary increase it is willing to pay.

Tough negotiations are nothing new to the Guild, but there is at least the expectation that bargaining will be conducted in good faith. But the Sun's employees, it turns out, are not just negotiating with their publisher: they're facing the entire Chicago-based Tribune Company, "the only media company with newspapers, television stations and Web sites in the nation's top three markets," according to its web site. Indeed, the Tribune Co. had revenues last year of \$5.4 billion, of which the Sun—one of a dozen daily newspapers—contributed only a sliver. (Free cash flow last year, for you numbers junkies, was roughly \$700 million, underscoring yet again that those presses print more than newspapers.)

So perhaps it's not surprising that Tribune Co. decided to marshal some of those vast corporate resources to squash its unionized employees in Baltimore, and hang the expense! Sending a clear signal that its negotiating intentions are anything but honorable, the company has been recruiting scabs from among its various other newspapers and shipping them to Baltimore for on-site training. This contingent of mercenaries is being housed in area hotels, gets fed on the Tribune's dime, is being paid at the Guild-negotiated scale and gets per diems, to boot.

And all that largesse was being thrown around more than a month before the contract expiration date.

Okay, so let's see what we've learned. When a multi-billion dollar newspaper chain wants anti-trust exemptions and a guaranteed income from colluding with a marketplace competitor, its newspapers are stand-alone properties that sink or swim on their own. But when a multi-billion dollar newspaper chain is seated across a bargaining table from its unionized employees, all of that corporation's resources can be made available to steamroller the opposition.

You see? Aren't numbers fun?

More about this kind of numbers game could be said, especially in the context of Enron, WorldCom and creative tax cutting. But given that this is indeed the way our political economy functions these days, perhaps the obvious lesson to draw from all this is to start negotiating industry-wide contracts wherever possible.

LETTER

To the Editor,

I read with great interest your coverage on the code of ethics controversy. There is one area that was not covered where I have some personal experience.

My editor had to be told rather forcefully by the general manager that he could not fire me for marching and playing my banjo on PATCO's picket line.

It is important that Guild members know they have every right to participate in concerted activity, which is protected by the

By TNG Convention action, letters to the editor shall be limited to 200 words and shall avoid libel and subjects detrimental to the Guild. Members subjected to personal attack shall be given opportunity to reply in the same issue, but publication of either attack or reply shall not be delayed longer than one issue.

Deadline: Friday before publication. (Next deadline: July 3.) Letters and articles proposed for publication may be e-

mailed to the editor at azipser@cwa-union.org.

For address changes, see the box on page 2 or e-mail to duesinfo@cwa-union.org; sending such changes to the editor will merely delay processing.

Fired reporter contemplates filing lawsuit

By Carrie Kirby
Northern California Media Workers

Fired technology columnist Henry Norr's dispute with the San Francisco Chronicle runs deeper and broader than a spat over how he filled out his time card, Norr said in a recent presentation.

"It's really an employee rights issue," said Norr, who was suspended and later terminated after calling in sick to participate in anti-war protests. "To me, the idea that an employer can dictate . . . the outside political activities of employees is a scary principle."

After Norr was arrested in the protest, March 20, Chronicle management banned any editorial staffers from taking a public stance on the war outside work. The paper says its policy, which was set without consultation with the Northern California Media Workers Guild, was necessary to project the image of balanced coverage of the war.

At a meeting of the Society for Professional Journalists May 14, Norr rejected the notion that reporters must remain apart from civic life. "People talk about this issue of whether journalists can go to demonstrations in this cocoon

about journalistic values, with no reference to the fact that there are laws that guarantee these rights," he said.

As a writer, Norr is known for helping consumers cut through the marketing claims and technical mumbo-jumbo of modern gadgetry. The world of high tech confronts reporters with just as much spin and conflicting agendas as that of politics, and Norr is respected as a smart and even-handed navigator of that world.

"I think that people should be held to very high standards in fairness and accuracy. I tried to live up to that," he said. Yet, Norr added, "I think this objectivity stuff is bunk. . . . You bring your biases and values to what you do."

The Media Workers Guild is preparing for arbitration with the Chronicle over Norr's termination. If the case is not resolved there, Norr said he will pursue legal avenues.

Lawyers and others who have heard about his firing have guided him to a host of little-known laws, including the San Francisco Police Code, that deny employers the right to restrict political activities, Norr said. "I do want to fight it out, and if nothing else I want to publicize these laws," he added.

Scabs: Sun blisters

Continued from page 1

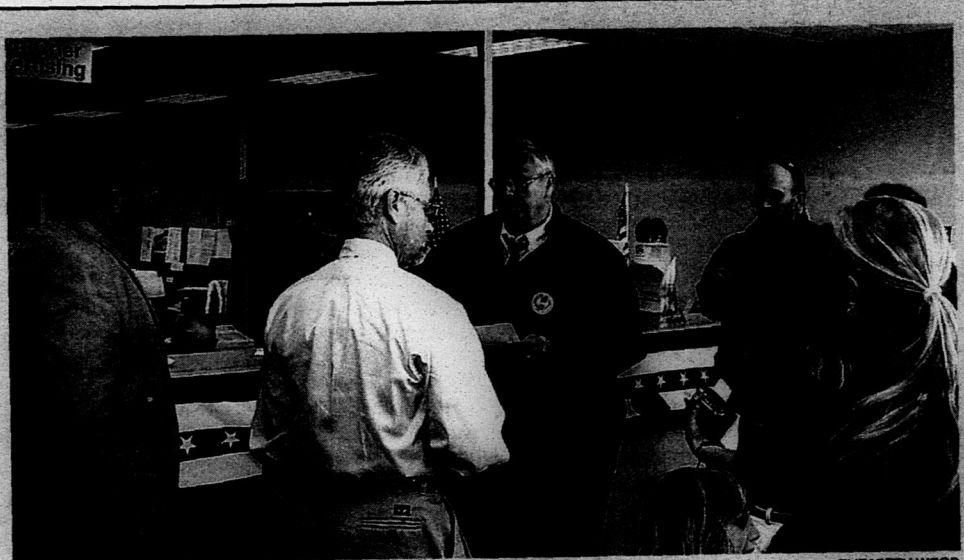
stand up to the powers-that-be and say 'This is wrong.' You have no spine, and you're in the wrong profession."

The Washington-Baltimore Guild, meanwhile, rallied outside the Sun in late May to protest the scabs' presence and has enlisted the support of central labor councils in Baltimore and the state. The local also is lining up political and community support, and plans an

intensive advertising and radio campaign.

"The Tribune has come to the table with an incredibly aggressive and unrealistic agenda," said the local's administrative officer, Lori Calderone.

The Guild and Tribune have clashed before: a bitter, five-month strike in 1990 at the New York Daily News resulted in a steep loss of readers and advertisers, forcing sale of the paper.



ELIZABETH WOOD

Vermont face-off

When the MediaNews-owned Brattleboro Reformer fired reporter Eesha Williams, 28, on learning that he was spearheading a union drive, a community delegation descended on the newsroom May 19 to demand his reinstatement. Shown above, left to right, are Reformer publisher David Emmons and MediaNews executive Martin Langeveld; presenting the

demand, which was rebuffed, is Vermont AFL-CIO president Ronald Pickering. Two-dozen of the newspaper's 41 employees have signed authorization cards for PACE and will be voting on representation June 26. To muster support, union organizers will hold a Rally for Justice June 22 at 4 p.m., with Doris "Granny D" Haddock as the featured speaker.

Public outcry restores job

By Kevin Madden
St. Louis Labor Tribune/PAI

The St. Louis Post-Dispatch returned an Air Force reservist to a full-time job, with full benefits and back pay, after the newspaper was flooded by a tidal wave of angry telephone calls and threats of subscription cancellations. The public reaction was sparked by an article in the May 1 issue of the St. Louis Labor Tribune.

The Post-Dispatch agreed to employ reservist John Masidonski part-time after he returned from an overseas tour of duty that lasted for more than a year. It did not offer him his former full-time position, even though federal law requires that employees called for military duty be offered virtually the same position upon return.

A groundswell of irate phone calls apparently forced Post-

Dispatch managers to reconsider.

"He has been returned to his old job, with full-time hours and full benefits and back pay," said Herb Goodrick, executive secretary of the St. Louis Newspaper Guild. "It's only right they did that, because it's federal law and it's in our union contract."

"The company received an overwhelming number of phone calls from people who protested the unfair treatment," Goodrick added. "That's what turned the situation around."

Masidonski began working at the Post-Dispatch in March 2000, handling automotive and real-estate display advertising. The Air Force Reserve called him to active duty in January 2002 and sent him to an undisclosed location overseas.

After returning, Masidonski called the Post-Dispatch to reclaim his former full-time job, but man-

agement would agree to put him in a different job for only two days a week, starting April 29. Two days later the story went public, prompting a volley of angry phone calls that swamped the Post-Dispatch switchboard, the circulation department and managers' offices. Co-workers had a similar reaction.

"Inside and outside sales staff employees were all extremely upset," said one staffer. "We were all disgusted."

Goodrick said management ultimately decided to restore Masidonski's full-time hours, benefits and back-pay retroactive to April 7, the date he first called the newspaper seeking reinstatement. And on May 2, the Post-Dispatch ran a story on the resolution in its business section. "The dispute over his hours when he returned was a misunderstanding," it quoted Kathy Joyce, vice president of human resources.

THE GUILD
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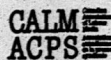
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DAYBOOK

Native American Journalists,
June 18-21, Green Bay, WI

Jobs with Justice annual mtg.,
June 19-22, Miami

Nat'l Assoc. Hispanic J'nalists,
June 26-28, New York City

Organizing Institute for Women,
July 25-27, Meany Center

Asian-American Journalists,
Aug. 13-16, San Diego

TNG-CWA Sector Conference,
Aug. 22-23, Chicago

CWA Annual Convention,
Aug. 25-26, Chicago

Nat'l Lesbian, Gay Journalists,
Sept. 11-14, Los Angeles

Pride at Work convention
Sept. 18-21, Tyson Corner, VA

CWA Customer Svc./Mgtk. Conf.,
Sept. 24-27, Fort Worth

FROM THE MORGUE

Fifty years ago this month:

Lobbied by Hearst, the California legislature enacts a bill that requires laid-off employees to "use up" severance pay before becoming eligible for unemployment compensation . . . A company union at the Los Angeles Examiner, trying to fight off a Guild organizing campaign, circulates posters depicting international rep Joseph L. Campo as an "ex-jail bird." The Guild files a libel suit. . . "Signs of progress" are seen in contract talks with the Seattle Times, following a "husky" strike vote.

Twenty-five years ago this month:

Approximately 550 members of the Washington-Baltimore Guild go on strike for three days against the Sunpapers; the New York Guild strikes for four days against the Daily News, forcing a 30-hour marathon bargaining session that yields an acceptable contract . . . OSHA orders the New York Times to designate its news room morgue a "hard hat" area because of low beams. . . A decertification attempt at the Ottawa Journal is beaten back by the razor-thin margin of 24-23.

Ten years ago this month:

Guild-represented employees of the New York Post vote unanimously to give their bargaining team strike authority. . . Jonathan Eddy, the Guild's first elected executive officer, dies in Houston at age 91. . . The governing board of the Boston Globe Employees Association recommends that the independent union affiliate with the Guild. . . A management-union health and safety committee investigates symptoms of "sick building syndrome" at the new CBC building in Toronto.

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